

Listed 9-25-81

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received SEP 4 1981
date entered SEP 25 1981

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Union Life Building

and/or common Providential Place

2. Location

street & number 212 Center Street

not for publication

city, town Little Rock

vicinity of

congressional district

Second

state Arkansas

code

.05

county

Pulaski

code

119

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Providential Place Horizontal Property Regime (See continuation sheet)

c/o Jim Guy Tucker, Agent for the Owners

street & number Tucker and Stafford Attorneys, 2148 First National Building

city, town Little Rock

vicinity of

state

Arkansas

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pulaski County Courthouse

street & number 405 West Markham

city, town Little Rock

state

Arkansas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

title State Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

ate 1977

federal state county local

depository for survey records Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

city, town Little Rock

state

Arkansas

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY

The Union Life Building is situated in downtown Little Rock on Center Street, which, at the time of the building's construction, marked the western edge of the city's financial district. Although construction of the building commenced in 1911, then planned as the People's Life Insurance Building, the site was abandoned in early 1912 leaving the building only partially complete. The structure remained unfinished until 1916 when the property was acquired by the Grand Lodge Ancient Order of United Workmen and was completed at a cost of \$250,000. Designed by prominent architect George R. Mann, the "T"-shaped eleven-story office building juxtaposes the compositional elements of the "Chicago Commercial Style" popularized by Louis Sullivan with decorative motifs from the vocabulary of Gothic architecture. Combined in the Union Life Building, these features enabled the architect to explore a "modern" design accentuating the verticality of the new office tower building type while referring to the historical imagery of eras past. Considered by its early owners, "the most beautiful building in the South," the Union Life Building still stands as a distinctive element in the contemporary Little Rock skyline.

ELABORATION

Structurally, the "T"-shaped, eleven-story office building is comprised of a concrete encased steel frame with 12-inch brick masonry curtain wall construction on the north, south and west elevations. Forming the leg of the "T", the north and south elevations have four bay spans. Pairs of one-over-one double-hung rectangular windows pierce each bay of the curtain wall with the exception of the fourth bay of the south elevation which is slightly recessed to articulate the elevator core. The windows of the eleventh story of the building's side elevations are small square single pane openings. The three bay west elevation forms the base of the leg of the "T". Its fenestration consists of pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows along the center axis of the building flanked by one window on either side. The tenth floor west elevation has five windows while three small windows light the eleventh floor. The horizontal member of the "T" is formed by the slightly projecting two bay eastern ends of the north and south elevations and the principal (east) facade.

Unlike the brick curtain wall of the Union Life Building's other elevations, its principal facade has a three bay span finished in white glazed terra cotta tile cast in an active array of Gothic motifs. As dictated by the Chicago Style, this facade is penetrated by three slightly recessed segmental arched openings with an overhanging canopy at one-story height articulating the principal entrance of the building which occupies the central archway. Banding accentuates the arch surrounds, appearing much like carved stone portals, and quatrefoils and crests embellish the exterior expression of the second floor structure as it penetrates each arch. The building's seven-story shaft is composed of bay windows, often referred to in this structural context as "Chicago windows", set between engaged columns which rise from Gothic ornamented brackets almost uninterrupted to the building's parapet. More

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For HCPS SEP 4 1981

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Item number

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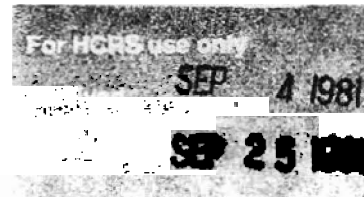
1

restrained Gothic decoration embellishes the horizontal structural members. The engaged columns emphasize the vertical expression of the facade and complement the Gothic character of the building's decorative scheme. Originally, the building was capped by a two-story element consisting of a range of narrow, trefoil-shaped arches surmounted by a decorative parapet enlivened with spires and battlements.

In 1943, the Union Life Insurance Company acquired the building and in 1958 conducted a major renovation. During this renovation a twelfth floor penthouse and mechanical rooms were added at the unfortunate cost of the loss of the building's parapet. A later renovation in 1977 saw the original metal sash windows on the east and west elevations replaced by bronze aluminum windows. Fortunately, these are sensitively identical in scale and proportion to the original windows. The interior of the building, historically less significant than the exterior, has undergone many changes, retaining little of its original fabric.

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In December of 1980, the Union Life Building (AOUW Building) was purchased by Office Building Associates, Inc. (OBA) and renamed Providential Place. Immediately after its purchase and conversion to condominium by OBA all units, representing 100% of the basic value of the condominium, were sold, in varying portions, to the following: Providential Life Insurance Company, Center Street Company (together known as the Providential Place Horizontal Property Regime), a partnership consisting of James L. Holsted, Bruce Wayne Holsted, David Parr, William Daniel Thomas, Jr., James Guy Tucker, Jr. and Betty Tucker, his wife, and William Daniel Thomas, Jr. and Johnnie Nell Thomas, his wife.

1982 2 5

1

3. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates 1911 - 1917 **Builder/Architect** George R. Mann

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The work of prominent architect George R. Mann, the Union Life Building is unique among Little Rock's early twentieth-century office towers. The building is a fine example of the Chicago Style of commercial architecture pioneered in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries by Louis Sullivan and Burnham and Root. Clearly derived from the Sullivan skyscraper, the Union Life Building's principal facade is organized into a base, curtain-walled shaft and definitive crown with fluent ornament applied only to emphasize and enhance the power and direction of the building's structure. Especially noteworthy is the abundant Gothic inspired terra cotta ornament that enriches the principal facade. The use of the Gothic vocabulary adds to the unusual and innovative architectural character of the building. It is the only Little Rock building that truly depicts the decorative potential of the early skyscraper form. In spite of a 1958 alteration that cost the structure its original Gothic-ornamented parapet, the compositional and proportional components that convey the essence of the Chicago style survive intact. The Union Life Building also warrants recognition as an important example of the work of its architect. Recognized as one of Arkansas' most significant early twentieth-century architects, Mann was responsible for the design of a wealth of important, largely Classical, structures throughout the state, including the Pulaski County Courthouse (1912, NR listed 18 October 1979), the Fordyce Bathhouse (1914, NR listed 14 November 1974), the Arkansas Gazette Building (1908, NR listed 22 October 1976), and an early design for the Arkansas State Capitol (c. 1900-1912, NR listed 28 June 1974). As a result of his training with William R. Ware at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his practice with Beaux Arts trained Edward Jacques Eckel, Mann's background was firmly rooted in Classicism. In this building, his pleasing adaption of Gothic motifs is testimony to his design adroitness and flexibility. The magnificently designed and detailed Union Life Building remains an architecturally significant landmark in the Little Rock skyline and a tribute to the many facets of its designer's expertise.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Arkansas Gazette, November 5, 1917; January 1, 1918; February 28, 1918.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .161 Acres

Quadrangle name Little Rock

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 1 5 5 6 6 5 5 0 3 8 4 5 0 1 0
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 9, Block 97, Original City; Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregg R. Peckham, Intern Architect, edited Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Staff (eg)

organization Roark, Perkins & Kennedy - Architects

date December 22, 1981

street & number 713 West Second Street

telephone (501) 372-0272

city or town Little Rock

state Arkansas

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Wilson Stiles

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

State Historic Preservation Officer title

date

2, 1981

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Peth Groover
Keeper of the National Register

date

9/25/81

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration